

## Abstracts

### Reform and Segmentation in Monastic Fraternities in Low Country Sri Lanka

STEVEN KEMPER      Pages 27–41

The Buddhist monkhood in each of the Theravāda countries of Southern Asia—Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka—is segmented into smaller fraternities (*nikāyas*). In Sri Lanka these fraternities have proliferated since the early nineteenth century. This proliferation has been interpreted as evidence of a Buddhist reform or return to orthodoxy and portrayed against the background of Sinhalese society as a whole. In this essay I argue that the establishment of twenty-five such *nikāyas* in the Low Country of Sri Lanka can be better understood both as serving a variety of interests (of which reform is one) and in terms of regional groups of monks and lay people.

### Issues in Southeast Asian History: Room for Interpretation— A Review Article

DONALD K. EMMERSON      Pages 43–68

Three dimensions capture much of the variation in Western scholarly images of Southeast Asian history. Different works attribute to the region different combinations of relative *unity* or *diversity*, *continuity* or *change*, and *originality* or *dependence*. Each of these choices summarizes a major controversy in the study of Southeast Asia. Together they form a cube that can be used to review existing literature and to identify room for future interpretation. In the 1970s, the antithesis of original continuity (*historicism*) and dependent change (*modernism*) was orthodox. In the 1980s, scholars could transcend these alternatives by recasting them as an opposition of original change (*microdynamism*) to dependent continuity (*macrosystemism*). Historicist and modernist writings have relied too heavily on psychocultural and political explanations, as have the rationalizations of indigenous elites. Pursuing the proposed dialectic could therefore help to rescue economic differentiation and conflict from their present neglect as aids to understanding.

### Minerva and the Crane (*Tsuru*): Birds of a Feather? Comparative Research and Japanese Political Change—A Review Article

ROGER BENJAMIN      Pages 69–76

Recent work on Japanese politics, as presented in five representative works reviewed here is based increasingly on comparative (cross-national) frameworks of analysis. The studies allow us to consider once again the relationship between area-based (contextual) and comparative-based knowledge. This essay argues that we are further ahead in

our understanding of Japanese politics if we move toward strategies of theory construction that place Japanese and comparative research in explicit juxtaposition. Arguments both for and against area-based and comparative-based explanations form the foundations of the conclusions developed.

***Post mortem* on the Wars in Indo-China—A Review Article**

DAVID P. CHANDLER

Pages 77–86

A major shortcoming in much Western writing about recent events in Indo-China is that the inhabitants of the region are seen as objects of policy rather than as subjects of history. Focusing in this way leaves out much of the picture and demeans the inhabitants of Indo-China who are largely responsible, after all, for defeating France and the United States. A number of the books reviewed here take a sympathetic insider's view of U.S. intervention in the region and try to approach the war objectively but still have an American focus. One book is a systematic attack on U.S. behavior in Cambodia since 1970. Finally a recently published collection of documents will be indispensable to students of the war, partly because it pays close attention to Vietnamese as well as American decisions.